



FEMA

Levee Provides Time For Animal Rescue

Cooke County, TX - Attempting to avoid the rushing waters of the Trinity River, a little elephant clung tightly to a tree during the 1981 flood in Gainesville, Texas. The Frank Buck Zoo lost more than 40 animals in the flood. To ensure the safety of the animals and to minimize the effects of future flooding, an earthen levee was erected. On the morning of June 18, 2007, that levee bought the staff much needed time to evacuate the animals.

Built in a creek bed on 13-acres of land, Frank Buck Zoo is home to approximately 130 animals from four continents. The zoo opened in 1951 with a mission to offer a wholesome, educational environment, one that has been threatened repeatedly by floods.

As a result, the city proposed to construct a flood control levee. The project was initiated April 1991 and completed November 1993. Total project cost was \$127,184. Gainesville received a \$63,592 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

The HMGP paid 50 percent of the cost. On December 3, 1993, the President signed the Hazard Mitigation and Relocation Act of 1993, which significantly increased funding available for hazard mitigation grants under section 404 of the Stafford Act. Presently HMGP pays 75 percent on approved projects that will prevent or reduce damage from natural hazards. The grants are made available for both public and private projects. Funds are administered by the state.

When flood waters rose on June 18, 2007, 112 animals were evacuated to a facility outside the floodplain before the levee was topped. Buildings located on higher grounds remained unscathed. Those same buildings were under water in the flood of 1981.

"The levee definitely protected the animals, and the structures that were on higher grounds and did not compromise the safety of the staff," Kleven said. "Otherwise, they would have been confronted with flood waters while rescuing the animals. We also were able to re-open the zoo more quickly than we did in 1981." The zoo opened within three days after the 2007 flood.



**Cooke County,
Texas**



Quick Facts

Year:

1981

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$127,184.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Flood Control

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)